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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1778 (2007), by which the Council requested me to report to it every three months on the security and humanitarian situation in eastern Chad, the north-eastern Central African Republic and the region, including movements of refugees and internally displaced persons and progress made in creating security conditions conducive to their voluntary return. The report covers major developments since my report of 17 December 2007 (S/2007/739), including the deployment of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), the European Union-led military force (EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic) and the Police tchadienne pour la protection humanitaire (PTPH).

II. Update on recent developments

A. Political developments

2. The situation in Chad has deteriorated markedly despite the peace agreement signed in Sirte, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, between the Government and the main Chadian armed opposition groups on 25 October 2007. In that agreement, the Government and the armed opposition groups undertook to respect the Constitution, cease fighting, grant amnesty to the rebels, allow rebel groups to participate in the running of State affairs, integrate rebel forces into the Chadian National Army and hold another meeting in Tripoli, including all political parties and relevant civil society organizations, to follow up on the implementation of the agreement. However, the parties have not adhered to the Sirte agreement. The Concorde nationale tchadienne (CNT) was the only armed signatory opposition group that maintained its commitment to the terms of the agreement. On 25 December 2007, 1,600 former CNT combatants were reportedly admitted to the Moussoro Military Training Centre in Chad.

3. On 12 December, three of the four main Chadian armed opposition groups — the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (UFDD), the Rassemblement des forces pour le changement (RFC) and the Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement fondamentale (UFDDF) — issued a statement announcing their

new alliance, the Resistance nationale. The alliance did not mean the merger of the three armed groups into a single movement, but rather the designation of an executive committee comprising leaders from each group, namely, Mahamat Nouri of UFDD, Timane Erdimi of RFC and Abdelwahid Aboud Makaye of UFDDF.

4. On 26 December, the Prime Minister of Chad, Nouradine Delwa Kassiré Coumakoye, issued a communiqué that, inter alia, accused the Government of the Sudan of sheltering, training, and equipping Chadian armed groups in order to destabilize Chad and impede the deployment of EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic and the establishment of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). In a separate communiqué issued on the same day, the Prime Minister called on the African Union, the United Nations and the European Union to help restore peace and security along the border between Chad and the Sudan.

5. In a letter addressed to the Security Council dated 28 December, the Government of the Sudan denied that it was planning to attack the Government of Chad and accused Chad of providing support to a Sudanese armed group, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), which, it alleged, had recently held a meeting on Chadian territory. The Government of the Sudan further accused Chad of conducting ground incursions and aerial bombardments in the Rijl al-Harzaya and Karmoula regions in Western Darfur, some 56 km south-west of Geneina. Subsequently, on 7 January 2008, the Secretary-General of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, Mohamed al-Madani al-Azhari, travelled to Khartoum and N'Djamena to urge the two parties to exercise restraint in an attempt to prevent an escalation in the tensions between them.

6. Meanwhile, in the Central African Republic Prime Minister Élie Doté resigned on 18 January, in reaction to a scheduled parliamentary review of a censure motion, and amid strikes by civil service employees demanding that the Government settle salary arrears. On 22 January, President Bozizé appointed Faustin Archange Touadera, a former professor at Bangui University, as his new Prime Minister. Mr. Touadera, who was initially rejected by the political establishment because the President had not consulted political parties on his appointment, was able to reach an agreement with labour unions, leading to the cessation of the strikes on 25 February. President Bozizé formed a new cabinet on 28 January, though key ministers remained in place. In the meantime, the Dialogue Preparatory Committee continued its work and is expected to finalize detailed proposals for convening an inclusive political dialogue by 31 March.

B. Security situation

7. The situation in the area along the border with Darfur deteriorated on 30 January, following reports that a Chadian National Armed Forces (FANT) aircraft had been shot down south of El Geneina, Western Darfur, by members of Chadian armed opposition groups. At the same time, Chadian military helicopters reportedly bombed suspected rebel positions near Goz Beida, in eastern Chad. Subsequently, the rebel movements claimed that they had seized control of Oum Hadjer, located between Abéché and N'Djamena.

8. On 31 January, Resistance nationale forces advanced from bases in the Chadian-Sudanese border region, in a column of an estimated 200 to 300 vehicles.

They moved from the east, bypassing main towns, including Abéché, until they clashed with FANT troops at Massaguet, 50 km north-east of N'Djamena. By 1 February, Chadian rebel forces had taken up positions around N'Djamena. On the night of 1 to 2 February, the forces' alliance entered the capital and surrounded the presidential palace and other strategic locations throughout the city. There were also reports that forces of JEM, a Darfur rebel movement, crossed into Chad in an effort to reinforce the Government troops in N'Djamena. In the early hours of 3 February, heavy fighting erupted in N'Djamena. On 4 February, the Chadian contingent of the subregional multinational force of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa left its base in the north-western Central African Republic and deployed to N'Djamena, reportedly to reinforce FANT. The Chadian contingent returned to Bangui on 5 March.

9. The Government troops initially managed to push the rebel forces back, and a day after the coup attempt, the rebel forces moved to approximately 30 km south-east of N'Djamena with approximately 100 vehicles, where they continued to threaten another attack on the capital. On 4 February, the rebel groups temporarily took control of Mongo, some 400 km east of N'Djamena, and later moved to Am Timan (about 600 km east of N'Djamena), where they were reported to have split into two main fronts. Both RFC and UFDD reportedly moved towards the Sudan border. On 5 February, fighting ceased and the Government troops consolidated their positions in the capital.

10. On 31 January, at the recommendation of the United Nations security management team, security phase IV was declared in N'Djamena, in accordance with United Nations safety and security rules and regulations. All non-essential United Nations personnel were subsequently evacuated to Douala, Cameroon, by a combination of air and ground transport. Following the first round of evacuation on 2 February, a small skeleton staff of MINURCAT, comprising about 33 personnel, remained and relocated to a hotel, where French forces provided protection. However, later on the same day, the hotel came under fire and the French forces removed all United Nations personnel, relocating them to a safer area pending evacuation to Cameroon until the end of the fighting. The evacuation was undertaken with the support of the Government of France and the logistic assistance of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A skeleton staff comprising 9 MINURCAT and 11 United Nations country team personnel remained in N'Djamena. By 22 February, all MINURCAT international staff had redeployed to the capital from Cameroon and resumed their normal activities.

11. In the meantime, during the African Union summit held in Addis Ababa from 25 January to 2 February 2008, the African Union Peace and Security Council condemned the unconstitutional attempt to take power in Chad and mandated President Al-Qadhafi of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and President Nguesso of the Congo to seek a lasting solution to the crisis in consultation with the Chadian parties. A team composed of representatives of both mediators, led by General Mokoko, Military Adviser to President Nguesso, arrived in N'Djamena on 13 February, where they met with President Deby, and departed Chad a few days later.

12. On 10 March, President Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in his capacity as Chairman of the Economic Community of Central African States,

(ECCAS) convened in Kinshasa an extraordinary summit on the situation in Chad. In the communiqué issued at the end of the summit, the heads of State or Government of the ECCAS countries condemned any attempt to attain power by unconstitutional means in Chad; urged all Chadian parties to implement the previous peace agreements; expressed their support for the African Union mediation efforts led by President Al-Qadhafi and President Nguesso; and pledged to provide emergency assistance for Chad.

13. On 13 and 14 March 2008, I attended the eleventh summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. In the margins of the summit, President Deby and President Al-Bashir signed a new agreement under the auspices of President Wade of Senegal. The parties agreed to reconcile, normalize their relations and contribute to peace and stability in the two countries and in the region. After recalling all previous agreements (the Tripoli agreement of 8 February 2006, the Khartoum agreement and its additional protocols of 28 August 2006, the Cannes Declaration of 15 February 2007 and the Riyadh agreement of 3 May 2007), the parties asked the international community to take all necessary measures to put in place a "peace and security force" in order to "guarantee and observe the mixed operations aimed at securing their common border". In addition, the parties agreed to the establishment of a contact group aimed at monitoring the implementation of the agreement, to cease supporting the activities of armed groups and to ensure that their respective territories were not used for the destabilization of one or the other State.

14. On 13 March, the Government of Chad issued a communiqué stating that rebel groups supported by the Government of the Sudan had crossed the border from the Sudan into Chad, near Moudeina. On 14 March, an armed group of some 25 to 45 vehicles was reportedly seen at Choukouyane, 140 km south-east of Abéché. A second group was reported closer to Abéché, just 45 km south-east of the town. FANT units have reportedly redeployed in anticipation of movements in the Sudan in the border area near Adré. On the same day, the Government of Chad lifted the state of emergency it had imposed in mid-February.

C. Humanitarian situation

15. Eastern Chad continues to host over 250,000 Sudanese refugees and more than 180,000 internally displaced persons who rely on humanitarian aid for their survival, including food, health services and water. Insecurity caused by acts of banditry and the absence of rule of law institutions have affected the capacity of the humanitarian community to provide assistance to those in need.

16. In addition to the nearly 500,000 refugees, internally displaced persons and other vulnerable populations in host communities in eastern Chad, some 10,000 to 12,000 refugees coming from Western Darfur have fled across the border since 8 February to escape militia attacks and bombing by the Government of the Sudan. All these war-affected people are in a very precarious situation along the volatile border.

17. The fighting in N'Djamena in early February led some 30,000 Chadians to flee to Cameroon, and an estimated 10,000 have still not returned. The deterioration of the security situation along the border of Chad and the Sudan has also affected the capacity of the humanitarian community to assist refugees and internally displaced

persons in sites close to the border. On many occasions, refugee camps and sites for internally displaced persons have been infiltrated by armed elements.

18. In the Central African Republic, an estimated 45,000 internally displaced persons remain in the three north-eastern prefectures of Vakaga, Haute-Kotto and Bamingui-Bangoran and 2,650 refugees from Southern Darfur are still living in a camp in Sam Ouadja, Haute Kotto prefecture. While the humanitarian community in the Central African Republic continues to provide assistance to vulnerable populations, insecurity caused by armed gangs impedes its work.

D. Human rights

19. The human rights situation in Chad has deteriorated as a result of the fighting in early February. In addition to civilian deaths, serious violations of human rights by both parties were reported, including the arrest of opposition leaders and destruction of property of human rights defenders. Three key figures of the unarmed opposition in Chad — Lol Mahamat Choua, former head of State and Chairperson of the committee to follow up the 13 August 2007 agreement on the reinforcement of the democratic process in Chad, Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh, spokesperson of the Coordination des partis politiques pour la défense de la Constitution, and Ngarlejy Yorongar, a member of parliament — were reported missing. On 11 February, in reaction to what they considered to be a crackdown against members of the unarmed opposition and civil society organizations, opposition party members pulled out of the committee to follow up the 13 August 2007 agreement. However, they indicated that they would resume their participation in the committee as soon as conditions conducive to peace were in place. On 14 February, a presidential decree declaring a nationwide state of emergency was issued, authorizing house searches and controls on the private and public press, limiting movement of people and vehicles and banning most public meetings.

20. On 5 February 2008, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, expressed deep concern regarding the military escalation in Chad and the threat this represented for civilians. On 22 February 2008, she called on the Government of Chad to investigate the killing of civilians during the recent fighting and voiced concern over the abduction and detention of several opposition leaders. She also called on the Government to respect international legal standards on the treatment of detainees and to respect fundamental human rights and freedoms during the period of the state of emergency.

21. In a press conference on 21 February, the Minister of Interior and Safety of Chad indicated that Lol Mahamat Choua had been put under house arrest, as the Government considered him a prisoner of war owing to his alleged collaboration with the armed opposition. A few weeks later, Ngarlejy Yorongar reappeared in Cameroon and later went to France. The whereabouts of Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh remain unknown.

22. On 27 February, President Deby established a commission of inquiry to gather information on disappeared persons and assess the damages to the State and the population in the areas where the fighting took place caused by the events of 28 January to 8 February. The commission, chaired by the President of the Chadian National Assembly and comprising seven Chadians as well as representatives of the Commission of the African Union, the International Organization of la

Francophonie, the European Commission and the Government of France, will submit a report to the President three months after its establishment.

III. Activities of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad

23. The strength of MINURCAT currently stands at 163 international and 64 national staff. My Special Representative, Victor Angelo, took up his duties in N'Djamena on 7 March. On 17 March, my Special Representative met with President Deby, who confirmed his full support for MINURCAT. During the reporting period, MINURCAT and EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic further consolidated their relationship with the Government of Chad through the Coordination nationale d'appui à la force internationale, headed by the Special Representative of President Deby for MINURCAT and EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic.

24. The Assistant Secretary-General for Field Support, Jane Holl Lute, visited Chad from 22 to 23 January to receive a first-hand assessment of MINURCAT deployment timelines and challenges. Her visit to Abéché and Goz Beida highlighted the magnitude of the logistical challenges the Mission will face and underscored the need to maintain realistic time frames for its deployment. Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guéhenno visited Chad on 25 January and met with President Deby and the national authorities to discuss outstanding issues, including the status-of-mission agreement, the MINURCAT police concept of operations and progress in the establishment of PTPH. The status-of-mission agreement was signed on 21 March.

Police

25. In order to provide the necessary start-up capability for the MINURCAT police component, 19 members of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations standing police capacity, who were deployed to MINURCAT on 19 November 2007, have been assigned key staff positions in an interim capacity. As at 11 March 2008, 170 out of 300 authorized United Nations police officers for MINURCAT have been recruited, 58 of whom have been deployed to N'Djamena. Some 37 additional police officers are expected to be deployed by the end of March 2008.

26. The deployment of the standing police capacity was instrumental in moving forward efforts to create an effective framework for the establishment of PTPH. The police component of the Mission has established sound working relationships with the Government of Chad, the United Nations country team, the humanitarian community and other key partners.

27. The training of 16 PTPH trainers was successfully completed on 10 January. MINURCAT has requested the Government to nominate candidates who will participate in the training prepared for the PTPH commanders and headquarters staff (77 police officers). This training programme was scheduled to start on 1 March 2008 but was delayed by the fighting in N'Djamena. In the meantime, the nomination, selection and certification of PTPH officers are ongoing. The training of the first batch of 220 PTPH officers will commence upon completion of the training of the PTPH commanders and headquarters staff.

28. In late January MINURCAT undertook a reconnaissance mission to eastern Chad, jointly with Chadian police authorities and EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic, to identify potential sites for police posts. The team identified sites for the police headquarters in Abéché, 6 stations in the main towns, 12 posts and the respective infrastructure and equipment needs.

29. A police familiarization programme to initiate a continuous MINURCAT police presence in Abéché started on 25 February with a team of eight officers deployed on a rotating basis. The programme has contributed to enhancing the visibility of MINURCAT in eastern Chad and helping to further inform national and international partners about details of the police plans for each location. This arrangement, a precursor of the MINURCAT presence in eastern Chad, will continue until a permanent office is established in Abéché.

30. In the Central African Republic, MINURCAT will soon establish its presence in Bangui, where it will be collocated with the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA). The United Nations intends to undertake a joint assessment mission to Birao, Vakaga prefecture, to reassess the situation and devise a strategy on how MINURCAT can best respond to the security-related challenges of the area in accordance with Security Council resolution 1778 (2007).

Gender

31. MINURCAT continues to promote gender mainstreaming in the Mission's activities, working closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Children's Fund to develop a concept paper on the establishment of mechanisms for the protection of women and children in eastern Chad. Operational plans to designate focal points for women and children in all PTPH stations and posts have been developed. These will be put in place after coordination with PTPH.

Rule of law

32. From 18 to 24 January 2008, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations conducted a mission to N'Djamena to discuss with the Chadian authorities, the United Nations country team, the European Union and other partners potential MINURCAT justice and corrections activities and ways in which such activities could be planned and implemented. The Mission determined that there was a need to harmonize formal and traditional justice mechanisms, and to build the capacities of traditional and formal justice officials. Also identified as key issues were the training of Chadian prison staff and the improvement of correction infrastructure. A further joint assessment mission involving the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the United Nations country team and the European Commission will visit Chad in early April to work with national counterparts on developing an integrated strategy and ensure complementarity of actions.

Military liaison officers

33. Of the authorized MINURCAT strength of 50 military liaison officers, 15 have been deployed. During the period under review, the military liaison officers focused their activities on establishing a comprehensive liaison network with key stakeholders, including joint reconnaissance and information-gathering missions to

Abéché, Goz Beida, Bahai and Iriba to further synchronize their deployments. The security situation and delays related to EUFOR force generation did not allow the planned deployment of up to 25 military liaison officers in January. However, the senior military liaison officer and an advance military liaison officer team deployed to the EUFOR operational headquarters in Paris and EUFOR headquarters in Abéché. Additional deployments will focus on the incremental movement of military liaison officers to the east and north, synchronized with EUFOR.

Support

34. In January, MINURCAT conducted an extensive series of surveys, in conjunction with EUFOR personnel, to all Mission locations in the east of the country. In February, following the redeployment of staff from Douala, the first sea shipment of 71 vehicles and 6 containers from the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi arrived in N'Djamena. In addition, the first shipments of equipment for PTPH arrived on 10 March. During March the Mission located and occupied three additional temporary sites for the expansion of its headquarters in N'Djamena. The initial operating location in Abéché was reopened on 14 March. The second shipment of strategic deployment stocks, filling 200 containers, left Brindisi, Italy, for Douala on 1 March.

IV. Establishment of the European Union-led military operation in Chad and the Central African Republic

35. On 28 January, the Council of the European Union launched the military bridging operation EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic and authorized the European Union operations commander, General Nash, to commence the deployment of forces and start the mission. While hostilities in early February delayed the deployment of EUFOR troops in theatre, the main force headquarters in Abéché and a logistics base in N'Djamena have been established. Since 19 February, EUFOR initial entry forces have carried out reconnaissance and contact missions in the central and southern parts of the area of operations. EUFOR specialists have also actively consulted with United Nations agencies and humanitarian non-governmental organizations through a civil-military information campaign on the ground. A French special force reconnaissance team, under EUFOR command, mistakenly crossed into the Sudan on 3 March and came under fire from Sudanese Armed Forces about 3 km into Darfur, near the Chadian town of Tissi. One French soldier was killed and another wounded. EUFOR is currently investigating to determine the circumstances in which the incident took place.

36. EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic announced its initial operational capability on 15 March, marking the official beginning of its 12-month mandate. Initial operational capability could be declared only with the establishment of command structures, a level-2 medical facility, the appropriate medical evacuation capability and a quick reaction force in Abéché. In addition, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1778 (2007), the European Union and the United Nations, in consultation with the Governments of Chad and the Central African Republic, will perform an evaluation of needs six months after the declaration of the EUFOR initial operational capability, in September 2008, and develop recommendations on the arrangements for following up on EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic.

37. As at 15 March, EUFOR personnel present in Chad and the Central African Republic numbered over 1,500, including 200 in Birao, north-eastern Central African Republic, constituting almost half of the total authorized strength. The attainment of EUFOR initial operational capability will enable MINURCAT to deploy and undertake mandated activities, beginning in Abéché. EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic intends to achieve full operational capability with the full deployment of three multinational battalions based in Farchana, Goz Beida and Iriba before the rainy season starts in June. These battalions will provide security for the five MINURCAT police stations envisaged for Goz Beida, Farchana, Guéréda, Iriba, and Bahai in Chad and the area of Birao in the Central African Republic. Fourteen European Member States are contributing troops to EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic. Albania also contributes to the operation, and consultations are ongoing with several other third States regarding their potential participation in the operation. EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic will therefore remain in Chad and the Central African Republic until 14 March 2009.

V. Observations

38. The recent attempt by Chadian armed groups to capture N'Djamena and the continuing instability in the Chad/Sudan border area, as well as the cross-border movement of armed groups, underscore the need for a comprehensive approach in addressing the situation in Chad. The internal crisis in Chad, the situation facing refugees and internally displaced persons in eastern Chad and the Central African Republic, the tensions between Chad and the Sudan and the situation in Darfur should be addressed simultaneously in a coordinated effort that takes into account the root causes of the internal conflicts and the regional aspects. To date, however, neither MINURCAT nor EUFOR is ideally mandated to address these issues.

39. In this regard, I welcome the ongoing mediation efforts aimed at helping the Chadian parties reach a negotiated and comprehensive settlement of their disputes, and at normalizing the relations between Chad and the Sudan. The signing of the Dakar agreement between President Deby and President Al-Bashir represents an opportunity for the two countries to ensure sustained dialogue and address the insecurity along their common border. It is important to remain steadfast and encourage the parties to seek lasting solutions through dialogue, and to refrain from any actions that could exacerbate an already volatile political and security situation.

40. While the international community can assist the parties in settling their internal and bilateral differences through constructive means, in the final analysis the parties themselves must demonstrate the political will and commitment necessary to resolve the underlying political and security challenges in the area. Constructive relationships between Chad and the Sudan, as well as effective linkages and coordination in the activities of MINURCAT, EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic, UNAMID, the United Nations Mission in the Sudan and humanitarian organizations operating in eastern Chad and Darfur, are essential for the restoration of security and the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons in the region.

41. Although the threat of further rebel attacks on N'Djamena has receded, towns and villages in the east remain at risk. I am concerned about the highly volatile security situation in Chad and the Central African Republic, which will continue to

have an impact on the much-needed assistance provided by the humanitarian community to the populations at risk. The humanitarian appeal for 2008 has so far attracted limited contributions against the requested $287 million. As MINURCAT and EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic deploy in an effort to help improve the security situation, I call on international partners to contribute to humanitarian, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

42. Although the events of early February delayed the deployment of the multidimensional presence, I am encouraged that MINURCAT and EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic swiftly resumed their deployment and activities. I am similarly pleased to note that MINURCAT and the Chadian authorities have made progress on the establishment of PTPH. I would like to thank those Member States that contributed to the MINURCAT trust fund and invite others to contribute in order to ensure a successful implementation of resolution 1778 (2007). PTPH will not be fully operational without the necessary funds.

43. In my report to the Security Council of 10 August 2007 (S/2007/488, para. 63), I stated that the Chadian police element "would assume exclusive law enforcement responsibility in carefully defined jurisdictions, centred on refugee camps and surrounding concentrations of internally displaced persons and associated towns". Developments in eastern Chad have prompted the Government of Chad to suggest an increased coverage by PTPH of locations where internally displaced persons are residing. As this will present significant logistical and financial challenges for MINURCAT, I intend to recommend that the six-month review of MINURCAT and EUFOR Chad/Central African Republic, which will be finalized in September, look closely at this issue and develop recommendations.

44. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of France for protecting and evacuating members of the international community, including United Nations personnel in N'Djamena, during the events of early February.

45. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my Special Representative, Victor Angelo, for his work and commend Ousseni Compaoré, who acted as head of the Mission from November to March, for his excellent management of the Mission during the extremely trying circumstances of the recent crisis. I also thank the staff of MINURCAT, BONUCA and the United Nations country team for their continued efforts to contribute to peace and development in Chad, the Central African Republic and the region.